
Promoting cross-culturalism in the EFL context: A teacher's perspective

Quanisha Charles

English Dept., Composition & TESOL, Indiana, USA

Email address:

q.d.charles@iup.edu

To cite this article:

Quanisha Charles. Promoting Cross-Culturalism in the EFL Context: A Teacher's Perspective. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*. Special Issue: Teaching English as a Foreign/Second Language. Vol. 2, No. 5-1, 2014, pp. 39-46.

doi: 10.11648/j.ijll.s.2014020501.16

Abstract: Promoting cross-culturalism in the EFL context is imperative in today's global society. EFL teachers should be prepared not only to raise cultural awareness and promote cross-cultural learning, but also to develop tools that evaluate cross-cultural competency and analyze student attitudes toward cross-culturalism. Due to a lack of interaction and exposure to diversified cultures within the EFL context, cross-cultural learning is explained as a major component that must be facilitated by Native English Teachers (NETs). NETs are noted as key sources to promoting cross-cultural learning and helping students gain cultural awareness through cross-cultural interaction. Cross-cultural competency is mentioned as a learning process that can be attained through consistent exposure and interaction with a dissimilar culture. It is suggested that NETs incorporate interactive lessons aimed to incite cultural awareness, promote cross-cultural learning, and enhance cross-cultural competency, as a means of fostering growth and helping students quickly adapt to environments that are culturally differentiated. The implementation of assessing student cross-cultural competency levels based upon interactions with NETs is highly recommended. Cross-cultural assessments that are created based upon interactions between the student and NETs are highlighted as an essential element to solidifying cross-cultural competency. Cross-cultural assessments are also noted as a consequential component that is often overlooked or disregarded as trivial within the EFL context. The implications for teaching cross-culturalism in the EFL classroom are essentialized, along with the ramifications of cross-cultural assessments.

Keywords: Cross-Cultural Learning, Cross-Cultural Teaching, Cross-Cultural Assessments, EFL

1. Introduction

Culture essentiate our uniqueness within society by offering unity among disparate individuals who subscribe to its conventions. Although culture enhances potential for interaction, it also serves as an impediment when individuals come from different cultures. By definition, culture is "a set of attitudes, values, norms, traditions, and goals that particularize a certain group" (Tomlinson and Sousa, 2011, p. 141). Incorporating the typical cultural lessons, such as foods and holiday traditions, into the learning environment is a great strategy for raising cultural awareness, but how is it useful to students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and how do we determine cultural competency levels based upon cultural lessons? To determine its usefulness, there have to be evaluative strategies to analyze student competency levels in their own

culture as well as in foreign cultures. Teachers must also assess how students actually apply the knowledge acquired. "Students must learn to examine their own cultural knowledge, values, and beliefs to enhance their cultural competence" (Kratzke & Bertolo, 2013, p. 107). Examining one's own cultural competence can be far more complicated to measure, especially when students learning EFL do not have the experience of mingling with other cultures in the classroom (Aubrey, 2009; Zhao, 2010). One must have the experience of actually being exposed to or interacting with a different culture, in order to understand the influence of one's own culture when presented to others. As EFL instructors, it is imperative to design lessons that cater to raising cultural awareness, promoting cross-cultural learning, evaluating cross-cultural competency levels, and analyzing student attitudes toward cross-culturalism.

Recognizing cross-culturalism depends on cross-cultural

communication, which is the process of interacting with someone whose values, traditions, and lifestyle, differs from one's own beliefs. Cross-cultural interactions occur when one culture comes into direct communication with another culture. Within the EFL classroom, cross-cultural interactions take place when the teacher or student realizes there is a cultural difference or lack of cultural awareness of the other culture. Cross-cultural interactions can be a difficult experience because "the skills associated with effective and rewarding cross-cultural communication can seem elusive to many people who lack experience of this form of interaction" (UTAS, 2012, para. 1). EFL teachers are responsible for assuming the position of an experienced leader who is able to reach across boundaries and introduce students to differing cultures; this is the beginning stage of building cross-cultural competency. Recognizing the influential significance of cross-cultural differences is acquired through experience, exposure, or direct interaction with someone who is culturally different (Cross et al., 1989; Cubukcu, 2013). The EFL teacher should aim to create a cross-cultural environment where relationships are built by sharing, listening, and learning about other cultures (The United Church of Canada, 2011). In turn, the students, and even teacher, are able to self-reflect and evaluate their attitudes toward cross-culturalism.

Self-reflectivity helps develop cultural competence, an essential element in establishing rapport and creating effective lessons in the educational environment. "Cultural competence involves a process of developing cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills" (Kratzke & Bertolo, 2013, p. 107). Evaluating cultural competency levels entails being culturally self-aware of one's own surroundings as well as the surroundings of a dissimilar culture (Aubrey, 2009; Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989; Cubukcu, 2013). Teachers must be aware of their own culture before they can assess another culture in response to their teachings. Teacher self-evaluations help rid cultural biases that can impede learning and instructional practices. Prior to measuring cross-cultural competency levels, teachers must have the skills and experience that enable them to evaluate how cultural competency is acquired and cultivated in the EFL context.

EFL teachers from English-speaking countries, commonly referred to as Native English Teachers (NETs), are primary sources when it comes to fostering cross-cultural learning in the EFL classroom, simply because they are different in culture, accent, and sometimes appearance. NETs bring forth the type of exotic curiosity that provocatively engages students and directly exposes them to a different culture. According to Seargeant's (2012) taxonomy and function of EFL:

The language is taught as something that is explicitly associated with the UK, the USA, or other countries traditionally perceived as English-speaking. As such, the name refers both to a teaching standard (based on native-speaker models), and a function (English learned as a cultural sampler with no immediate expectation of daily instrumental use, and instead associated with scenarios

such as the tourist encounter) (p. 167).

Learning EFL directly from NETs afford students the opportunity to undertake Seargeant's function of EFL with the direct source; someone who is considered a native-speaker and virtually a tourist, or Guest English Teacher.

The advantage for the NET that is suggested by Seargeant seems as though English can only be enhanced as a movement toward globalization. For many, English is associated with globalization and advancement (Song-Ae, 2005; Van de Vijver, 2002; Aubrey, 2009; Kramsch, 2003; Seargeant, 2012). In the EFL context, NETs are considered the foreign culture and English is the foreign language associated with the native-speaker. "So long as native-speaking English is a standard for achieving prominence in society, language learners will aspire to it[...]" (Sybing, 2011, p. 467). Having a NET in the EFL classroom provides students with an idea of the voice and language they are expected to aspire to in a world of global competition. Nevertheless, losing one's cultural perspective of self in order to learn or acquire a language should be avoided. English must be promoted as a contextualized language subjected to cultural differences, so that students are better prepared to face English discursively and are conscious of cross-cultural competency.

Within the EFL context, students are not taught how to view and use their own spoken English as an asset to show the variations of English. There are no cross-cultural assessments substantiating that students are, in fact, knowledgeable of the fluctuating and contextualized English, which is key to strengthening one's level of cultural competency and international competitiveness. In spite of the various ways teachers can assess cross-cultural learning and students' reaction to cross-culturalism, cross-cultural assessments conducted by the NETs within the EFL context are not taken seriously. Based on my work experience within Korea's secondary schools, EFL courses are treated as electives in which conversing with NETs and experiencing a different culture is only an option or privilege. Students are not taking full advantage of their NETs in the EFL classroom (Zhao, 2010), thus students are not increasing cross-cultural competency levels which is important in this global age.

By practicing cross-culturalism within the EFL context, students are shown how English can be used to promote, discuss, and impact any and all cultures as the lingua franca. English as the lingua franca is "a strategy for communicative interaction" (Seargeant, 2012, p. 168). Essentially, cross-culturally interacting with students in the EFL context predisposes them to a variety of rhetorical traditions that allow students to gain the experience needed to acquire cross-cultural competency. Each year, hundreds of NETs from heterogeneous countries, such as the U.S., Canada, U.K., New Zealand, and Australia, arrive in South Korea with the objectives of teaching English (Song-Ae, 2005). Therefore, NETs must be culturally aware of what they represent, what they present, and how their presentation is received by students in the EFL setting.

NETs must be mindful that students are situated in an environment where they are learning English, yet exposed to rhetoric that does not necessarily conspire to one form of English, and students must be aware of those cultural differences. The ongoing high demands for NETs in the EFL context plays a huge part in why cross-culturalism and raising cultural awareness are a necessity.

2. Raising Cultural Awareness

2.1. Interactive Learning Strategies

Developing interactive learning tactics that raise cultural awareness is beneficial for both the teacher and student. Interactive strategies help with establishing teacher-student rapport, which cultivates learning. One strategy to consider is designing role-play lessons, in which students are placed in scenarios where they encounter a cross-cultural abnormality, such as slurping noodles at the dinner table, and are asked to effectively address the issue. Because this strategy will be incorporated in the EFL classroom where the prevalence of other cultures is absent, it is recommended that the teacher initially show videos of different cultures that students are expected to interact with and point out a barrier for students to overcome. Videos provide students with a sense of what to expect. After the video is shown, teachers should allow students to determine an effective solution and how it could have been solved differently within their own culture. Allowing students to solve matters pertaining to cross-cultural interactions give both the teacher and student a further insight into cultural awareness. Lessons catered to raising cultural awareness through role-play scenarios give students an autonomous voice of self-expression and responsibility; teachers are practically raising cultural awareness by fostering student independence.

Another way to raise cultural awareness is to encourage collaborative growth. Given that students often share a similar culture in the EFL environment, it will be advantageous for students to bring forth effective solutions by brainstorming collectively. Teachers can carry out this activity by placing students into groups, have them share significant historical moments within their culture, and observe how other students react. This activity establishes a positive learning environment that stimulates growth and reinforces self-evaluation. Both teachers and students are able to monitor what students know about their culture, how students identify themselves, and their thoughts toward a dissimilar culture. If teachers are in a classroom where students appear reticent and reluctant to share their thoughts openly, group exercises may be a preferred strategy. Sousa and Tomlinson (2011) argued that structured group work is more manageable and allows students to share responsibility, so that no one gets singled out.

2.1.1. Structured Group Work

Structured group work permits students to communicate with peers or group members within an equal opportunity

environment that is noncompetitive or dominated by one person (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2010). In an attempt to raise cultural awareness, structured group work should demonstrate that students are able to communicate with peers about their culture, muster information to complete a task regarding their culture, and work with peers to achieve the overall task. Through structured group work, students are able to share their cultural experience of self-awareness, while allowing peers to acquire different experiences from various perspectives (Diaz-Rico, 2008). Here is a great strategy allowing teachers to orchestrate structured group work that helps to raise cultural awareness:

- Assign groups to various cultures with each person given a specific task.
- One student researches the assigned culture and its associated language.
- Another student identifies two ways in which English has positively impacted the culture.
- A third student identifies two ways in which English has negatively impacted the culture.
- Everyone in the group work cooperatively to bring forth a resolution for the negative impacts.

If time permits, allow groups to compare and contrast their assigned culture with their own culture, as a means of furthering awareness of self and other cultures.

2.2. Rationale for Raising Cultural Awareness

As a culturally-responsive educator, it is imperative to create a learning environment that promotes cultural awareness, embraces various cultures, and reinforces respect for all cultures (Diaz-Rico, 2008; Cross et al., 1989). Researchers find that students in the EFL context, having little experience interacting with different cultures, often form their perceptions of other cultures based upon media propaganda (Zhao, 2010; Aubrey, 2009). Depending upon media propaganda often leads to misinformed conclusions and biases that are counterproductive to embracing cross-culturalism. In a positive learning environment, and by positive I mean one that shows respect and acknowledgement of all cultures, students are more open to detailing how their culture compares or contrasts to other cultures (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2010). A positive environment invites students to not only share their culture with the EFL instructor, but also expose their perspectives and concepts of other cultures. When students are at the point of exposing their thoughts about a different culture, teachers should use student feedback as an index for building cross-cultural competency levels by promoting cross-cultural learning.

3. Promoting Cross-Cultural Learning

Cross-cultural learning is the process of being culturally aware of one's own culture, and continuously exposed to and educated about a different culture. Per Cubukcu (2013), "Culture learning usually refers to the acquisition of

knowledge about, and perhaps even skills in enacting, a particular foreign culture” (p. 4). NETs are the primary source for establishing cross-cultural learning, because students are attempting to acquire the language of the teacher through cross-cultural interaction. The voice and teachings of NETs are likely to be mimicked by students who aspire to Westernized rhetorical conventions and stylistics (Sybing, 2011; Song-Ae, 2005). However, learning and experiencing cross-culturalism, while remaining aware of one's own culture, eliminates the necessity of foregoing self-agency and depending upon the instincts of the NET. Students are to react consciously and independently during a cross-cultural interaction, as a means of solidifying their understanding of cross-culturalism. Kramersch (2003) argued that “teaching English as culture and voice entails showing them [learners] how the choices made by individual users of English, be they native or non-native, construct relationships among utterances, and between utterances and their recipients” (p. 5). Acquiring the cultures of English includes voice, which is why experience and direct interaction is significant. Using voice as a vehicle to construct relationships among utterances is ultimately based upon cultural awareness and cross-cultural competency.

3.1. English Globalization in the Korean Context

Holding the status of lingua franca, English is typically promoted and taught throughout the globe (Sybing, 2011; Song-Ae, 2005; Aubrey, 2009). English is viewed culturally and economically advantageous for international competitiveness by the Korean government (Byeol, 2013; Song-Ae, 2005). “Korean learners, particularly at a high level of English proficiency, want to learn about English-speaking cultures, and English ways of thinking and negotiating, which Korean schools only superficially teach” (Song-Ae, 2005, p. 200). NETs afford students the experience of indulging in actual cross-cultural learning, while maintaining the home advantage of being the dominant culture, surrounded by their mother tongue. Kramersch (as cited in Cubukcu, 2013, p. 832) highlighted that “cultivating international understanding, responsibility, and effective participation in a global age” is a main focus of learning a language. NETs introduce students to rhetorical conventions that differ from their conventions, a language that differs from their language, and a culture that differs from their culture, all of which work towards cultivating international comprehension and cross-cultural learning.

In South Korea, NETs hold the title of “Guest English Teachers” and their main priority is teaching students to speak English more native-like (Song-Ae, 2005; Sybing, 2011). The notion of cross-cultural learning is not heavily promoted, yet the culture of English is demanded. The influx of NETs is greatly encouraged by the Korean government for the promotion of increasing English and globalization in the Korean context (Byeol, 2013). Without the presence of NETs, students are not necessarily

experiencing cross-cultural interactions or cross-cultural learning; thus, students are not enhancing cross-cultural competency levels. *The Korea Times* reported that Koreans spend approximately \$15.8 billion per annum on learning English (Byeol, 2013). Moreover, students are constantly being taught English by their Korean English teachers in a grammatical sense, but they are hardly given the chance to apply their learned English in reality (Song-Ae, 2005). Therefore, NETs, interactive cross-cultural programs, and cross-cultural assessments, all of which embodies cross-culturalism, are imperative in a society that strives towards globalization and advancement.

In many cases, globalization is being equated to advancement, with English as the lingua franca. Suárez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard defined globalization as “what happens when the movement of people, goods, or ideas among countries and regions accelerates” (as quoted in Aubrey, 2009, p. 121). If students from English-speaking countries, such as the U.S., are accelerating and appear more adept at interacting with people from diverse cultures, whereas individuals from non-English-speaking countries, such as South Korea, seem inept to diversity, competition within globalization becomes unfair to non-English speakers. Song-Ae (2005) noted that Koreans are embracing globalization by accepting and exploring other cultures. Accepting and exploring other cultures does not necessarily equate to developing cross-cultural competency. One can watch a culturally-differentiated movie or listen to a culturally diverse song as a form of acceptance and exploration. Acceptance and exploration demands cross-cultural learning, which requires cross-cultural interaction. Kumaravadivelu (as quoted in Aubrey, 2009, p. 121) reckoned that globalization “seeks to promote among the general public a genuine understanding of the value of cultural diversity in shaping national identity.” NETs, from diversified countries, promote globalization, or rather acceleration, through practicing cross-culturalism and helping students adapt to differentiation and participate on an equal footing with NETs.

3.2. Cross-Cultural Learning in Practice

A cross-cultural learning strategy that helps engage students entail showing the importance of other cultures and not just telling why the culture is important. If the teacher lacks cultural competence and self-awareness, it is impossible to analyze another culture without being biased or misinformed. For NETs who are new to teaching EFL, it is recommended that the introductory class be the foundation of establishing rapport, raising cultural awareness, and promoting cross-cultural learning. Teachers should tell students about their culture, and in return, have students talk about their culture. It must be a give and take situation, in which both the teacher and students are actively involved and learning about one another, or else the engagement will fail. Both the teacher and student should be evaluating what they know, what they do not know, and how they can increase cross-cultural competency

levels. The introductory class is most important because this is when students are most impressionable.

A culturally-responsive teacher understands the importance of creating a comfortable and sharing environment. An easy way to accomplish such an environment is by implementing an interactive game activity that engages students, so that they feel comfortable sharing their culture. Try creating a power-point in which students are placed in groups and asked to write what they know about the teacher and how they drew their conclusion. Hearing student responses is always insightful. To make the classroom more fun and interesting, turn the group activity into a game competition where students are given points for answering questions correctly about the teacher. Be mindful that students are learning EFL, so make sure that questions are simple and straightforward, e.g. "Where am I from?" After the game, have students replicate the teacher's idea and list questions about themselves for other classmates to guess the correct answer. Fotovatnia and Namioo (2013) determined several conclusions about competitive games within the EFL context:

- "They motivate learners to enjoy language learning;
- They help learners adopt different attitudes not [only] to the language learning process but also to their teachers;
- They provide a learning environment which enhances interaction among language learners;
- They provide a positive, relaxed, and stress-free atmosphere in the classroom which enhances learners' performance in the classroom" (p 207).

A comfortable and sharing environment provides the teacher with more information about the students, but more importantly, it allows the teacher to observe students' attitudes towards cross-culturalism and analyze cross-cultural competency levels.

4. Analyzing Cross-Cultural Competency Levels

4.1. Cultural Competency Encouraging Cross-Cultural Competency

Cultural competency is a key component that engages students, and it warrants respect within the learning environment. A teacher who is culturally competent is empowered to establish cross-cultural competency. Cross et al. (1989) highlighted three critical elements of a solidified cultural competence model: 1) self-awareness; 2) adaptation to diversity; and 3) cultural assessments. The teacher is in charge of initiating and promoting learning that enhances and assesses cross-cultural competency. However, the teacher must first define the levels of cultural competency students are expected to attain. The levels of cultural competency should be assessed based on knowledge and activities discussed in the classroom. During evaluations, students should be able to elaborate

and reflect on what they had thought before and what they now know about their culture, the culture of the EFL instructor, and the impact of cross-culturalism. At the time of evaluation, both the teacher and student should be comfortably familiar with the four levels of cultural competence (See Figure 1).



Figure 1. Four Levels of Cultural Competence

Source: Brake, T., Walker, D. M., & Walker, T. (1995). *Doing business internationally: The guide to cross-cultural success*. New York, NY. (p. 33.)

4.1.1. Significance of Cross-Cultural Competency

The importance of cross-cultural competency introduces students to aspects beyond foods, music, and holidays; it acknowledges the stronger components underlying one's culture. For example, if one learns how to say "hello" in Korean, it would probably still be considered rude if the body gesture of bowing is not performed along with the greeting. Greetings also vary according to context. While greetings within the English language are not as strict with body gestures, applying honorifics and addressing individuals with correct titles, such as Mrs., Dr., Sir, are still expected and respected. Cross-cultural competency enables students to recognize the variations of customary practices and execute them successfully according to contexts.

4.1.2. NETs Lack of Cultural Competency

The concern is that many NETs enter the EFL classroom without much experience and little cultural competence of the environment they intend to teach (Song-Ae, 2005). While it is not impossible for NETs who are culturally incompetent to educate EFL students, it is far more complex. Being culturally incompetent can lead to not only a lack of understanding, but also a lack of engaging with students and developing cross-cultural competency levels. Increasingly, educators are coming to understand that cultural competence or cultural relevance is fundamental to teacher and learner success in contemporary classrooms [...] (Tomlinson, & Sousa, 2011). On the bright side, these culturally incompetent NETs are being situated in a context where they are becoming culturally competent expediently through direct exposure and cross-cultural interaction. Gaining cultural competency is something that can be acquired through one's teaching experience, but cross-cultural learning is an ongoing process. The teacher has to be open-minded and interested in acclimating to a different culture, or else he or she will face tremendous difficulties

and not only remain culturally incompetent, but also culturally blind. Cross et al. (1989) defined culturally blind as the state of noticing other cultures and not seeing a difference. One who is culturally blind is greatly influenced by their own culture, so they tend to think that everyone and every culture is practically the same and should be treated as such (Cross et al., 1989). Differences between cultures are what makes them interesting. Needless to say, it is critical that NETs gain an in-depth understanding of the culture where they teach or intend to teach, in order to build relationships, enhance instructional practices, and adapt suitably to their environment, prior to assessing students' attitudes toward cross-culturalism.

5. Assessing Students' Attitudes toward Cross-Culturalism

5.1. A Teaching Experience in the Korean Context

Based on my personal experience of teaching EFL in South Korea, receiving student feedback was just as important as raising cultural awareness and promoting cross-cultural learning. Assessing students' attitudes toward cross-culturalism helped maintain rapport and increase cross-cultural competency levels. Moreover, using cross-cultural assessments as a means of determining what students know, what they did not know, and their attitudes toward a dissimilar culture, was helpful for lesson preparation. Students understood that I was an American but they knew merely nothing about the various cultures that underlie America. To shed light on American cultures, it was important and imperative to learn more about the Korean culture. Learning more about Korean culture gave me insight on how to engage with students and determine the most appropriate instructional methods for learning. I determined that students were more interested in topics pertaining to their culture, yet more intrigued when these topics were interpreted through the English language. Song-Ae (2005) concluded that in the Korean context "effective teaching was built on warm and trusting relationships between teachers and learners, teachers' awareness of learners' first language, culture, and educational context..." (p. 200). Likewise, the effectiveness of learning and understanding is built upon trusting relationships and students' awareness of the teacher's language and culture.

5.2. Assessment Strategies

Actively involving students in evaluative assignments is beneficial. Any effective lesson should entail active student participation; one that encourages student feedback. Diversifying lessons in the classroom in response to cross-cultural learning is an advantage, because it promotes and perpetuates cross-cultural competency. A few strategies for evaluating student attitudes towards cross-culturalism are through self-assessments, role-play activities, and post-assessments.

5.2.1. Self-Assessments

Self-assessments can be easily administered by having students keep a daily journal in which they write about what they learned about a different culture, what they thought beforehand, and how it compares or contrasts to their own culture. Any assessment focused on student advancement should consist of self-assessments that provide students with appropriate feedback that enables them to reflect on how they learn best (Tomlinson & Sousa, 2011). Through self-assessments, students can provide feedback on what they would like to know in the future and how being cross-culturally competent has impacted their mindset or thoughts of self. Both the student and teacher can evaluate student learning and monitor levels of competency.

5.2.2. Role-Play

Role-play activities are a great way to determine how students will put their recently acquired knowledge in action. Furthermore, it empowers students to work collaboratively, strategically, and creatively, on the assignment. To make the activities more interesting, teachers can assign students to different cultures, provide them with scenarios, and ask students to find a cross-culturally competent ending to the scenario. Diaz-Rico (2008) discovered that role-play activities increases one's communicative competency skills, in addition to cultural competency skills. Teachers may choose to assess student reaction by observing, taking notes, creating a checklist, or being the moderator for the role-play assignment. The goal for teachers is to monitor student performance and record influential communicative and/or cultural factors that impacted the assignment and influenced cross-cultural learning. As a post-assessment, students can reflect by writing what they did not know, what they had learned, and how they will apply the information in the future.

5.2.3. Post-Assessments

The use of post-assessments can be very useful in the EFL environment, because like self-assessments, post-assessments provide critical feedback on what is known, what should be learned, and what can be avoided. Post-assessments "provide the teacher with opportunities to assess linguistic and academic growth as well as cognitive learning processes and socio-cultural skills" (Herrera, Murry, & Cabral, 2007, p. 243). Raising cultural competency levels and increasing cultural awareness through cross-cultural learning enables the teacher to evaluate student comprehension by creating strategies that explicitly cater to teacher-student cultural dimensions. Post-assessments are formative evaluations that allow the teacher to analyze the effectiveness of their instructions and what changes should or could be made to accommodate the needs of the learner. Post-assessments allow students to reevaluate their past decisions for a more thought-out solution (Herrera, Murry & Cabral, 2007). Consider post-assessments as a guidance tool that informs the instructor of what needs to be addressed in order to promote growth and competency levels in the learning environment.

6. Ramifications of Cross-Cultural Assessments

As previously mentioned, cross-cultural assessments are not taken seriously. One problem is that cross-cultural assessments have unrealistically high standards and numerous limitations, such as intellect abilities and biases (Van de Vijver, 2002). In general, cross-cultural assessments are expected to have foci on raising cultural awareness that pertain to the superficiality of cultures, such as holidays, foods, and music, in order to avoid biases. Attempting to thoroughly detail what a culture represents prompts stereotypes that can and should be avoided. In-class testing should be a summary of cross-cultural learning that was acquired through actual cross-cultural interactions with the NET.

Another reason for not taking cross-cultural assessments seriously is possibly because administrators within the EFL context are unsure of how to measure cross-cultural learning in an environment where they themselves have a lack of cross-cultural competence and experience. There is also a strong belief that cross-cultural assessments lack validity (Van de Vijver, 2002), but validity is only a minor issue if assessments are based upon direct cross-cultural interactions with the NET. The more students are exposed to NETs and familiarized with cross-culturalism, the higher the validity of cross-cultural assessments and cross-cultural competency levels. An institutional failure to consider applying cross-cultural assessments in the EFL context has placed the responsibility on NETs to create evaluations focused on raising cultural awareness and promoting cross-cultural learning. NETs must provide the fundamental change that is essential to epitomizing cross-culturalism in the EFL context.

7. Conclusion

In a society where globalization is equated to acceleration and English is the language associated with globalization, it is safe to say that cross-culturalism is required in the EFL context. In order for one to promote a cross-culturally competent environment, there has to be a mutual understanding of cultural objectives and what aspects of cross-culturalism are to be attained. As the EFL instructor, NETs are responsible for raising cultural awareness and carrying out strategies that promote cross-cultural learning. Students learning EFL are likely to have minimum direct exposure with different cultures (Zhao, 2010; Song-Ae, 2005); so much of the information must be learned in the classroom. Raising cultural awareness is only one step towards cross-cultural competency. Students must be consistently exposed to cross-cultural learning, whether it is through videos, assessments, or role-play scenarios.

Cross-cultural learning is the next step towards cross-cultural competency. At this stage, students are now aware of self and what is expected, yet they are still uncertain of how to apply the information in the appropriate context

(Song-Ae, 2005; Byeol, 2013). It is best that teachers administer an assessment to determine what students know, what they do not know, and what they should learn. The last stage of actually acquiring cross-cultural competency entails self-awareness, knowledge of specific cultures, and skills to effectively interact with other cultures (Cross et al., 1989). Cross-cultural competency is not something that can be acquired overnight or within a week; it is a learning process that is achieved through continuous cross-cultural exposure and interaction.

Evaluating students' attitudes toward cross-culturalism is encouraged based upon student-teacher interactions, particularly because the NET is the individual whose culture has been directly exposed to students. Due to a lack of cross-cultural interaction with other cultures, assessing student competency of other cultures can lead to biases. Indeed, cross-cultural assessments are problematic, because of indeterminacy in rating proficiency and standards per cultural contexts. Nevertheless, NETs can remain actively aware of the subjective nature of data from cross-cultural assessments that does not negate its value in the EFL context. While such rating proficiency of cross-cultural assessments may have insufficient validity for long-term studies, cross-culturalism remains an ideal photograph, providing a benchmark to guide the current students within the EFL context.

References

- [1] Aubrey, S. (2009). Creating a Global Cultural Consciousness in a Japanese EFL Classroom, *English Language Teaching*, 2(2), 119-131.
- [2] Brake, T., Walker, D. M., & Walker, T. (1995). *Doing business internationally: The guide to cross-cultural success*. New York, NY.
- [3] Byeol, K. S. (2013). *Excuse my Konglish*. Retrieved from http://www.iafor.org/offprints/acll2013-offprints/ACLL2013_Offprint_0138.pdf
- [4] Cross, T., Bazron, B., Dennis, K W., Isaaca, M R. (1989). *Towards a culturally competent system of care*, Washington D.C: Georgetown University Child Development Center. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED330171.pdf>
- [5] Cubukcu, F. (2013). Pre-service English teachers' intercultural sensitivity. *International Journal of Human Sciences*, 10(1), 832-843.
- [6] Díaz-Rico, L. T. (2008). *A course for teaching English language learners*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- [7] Díaz-Rico, L. T., & Weed, K. Z. (2010). *The crosscultural, language, and academic development handbook: A complete K-12 reference guide* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- [8] Fotovatnia, Z. & Namioo, M. (2013). The effects of cooperative versus competitive words games on EFL learners' vocabulary gain, motivation, and class atmosphere. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(1), 189-208. doi:10.5901/mjss.2013.v4n1p189

- [9] Kramsch, C. (2003). Language, culture, and voice in the teaching of English as a foreign language. *English Language Teaching*, 8(1), 4-21.
- [10] Kratzke, C. & Bertolo, M. (2013). Enhancing students' cultural competence using cross-cultural experiential learning. *Journal of Cultural Diversity*, 20(3), 107-111.
- [11] Herrera, S. G., Murry, K.G., & Cabral, R. M. (2007). *Assessment accommodations for classroom teachers*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- [12] Seargeant, P. (2012). *Exploring world Englishes: Language in a global context*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- [13] Song-Ae, H. (2005). Good teachers know where to scratch when learners feel itchy: Korean learners' views of native-speaking teachers of English. *Australian Journal of Education (ACER Press)*, 49(2), 197-213.
- [14] Sybing, R. (2011). Assessing perspectives on culture in EFL education. *ELT Journal: English Language Teachers Journal*, 65(4), 467-469.
- [15] The United Church of Canada. (2011). *Defining multicultural, cross-cultural, and intercultural*. Retrieved from <http://www.united-church.ca/files/intercultural/multicultural-crosscultural-intercultural.pdf>
- [16] Tomlinson, C. A., & Sousa, D. A. (2011). *Differentiation and the Brain: How Neuroscience Supports the Learner-Friendly Classroom*. Ingram Distribution. Kindle Edition.
- [17] UTAS. (2012). *Cross cultural awareness and communication*. Retrieved from the University of Tasmania student centre website: http://www.utas.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/11538/Cross-Cultural-Awareness.pdf
- [18] Van de Vijver, F.R. (2002). Cross-Cultural Assessment: Value for money? *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 51(4), 545-566.
- [19] Zhao, B. (2010). How to enhance cross-cultural awareness in TEFL. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 6(2), 100-104.